

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. A method of increasing the number of M2 receptors in the brain of an animal, including a human animal, comprising administering to said animal an effective dose of smilagenin.
2. A method of increasing cognitive function, comprising administering to said mammal an effective dose of smilagenin.
3. A method according to claim 2 wherein said effective dose comprises a dose sufficient to expose receptors to a concentration of smilagenin of approximately 10^{-6} M.
4. A method according to claim 3, which comprises administering said effective dose via a foodstuff or beverage.
5. A method of treatment of Parkinson's disease in a human, which comprises administering to said human an effective dose of smilagenin.
6. A method according to claim 5, which comprises administering a foodstuff or beverage containing an effective dose of smilagenin.
7. A method according to claim 6, wherein smilagenin is administered in the form of a pharmaceutical composition.
8. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein smilagenin is administered in the form of a pharmaceutically effective amount of smilagenin in the form of an extract derived from a plant of the genus Smilax, Asparagus, Anemarrhena, Yucca or Agave.